

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

East to West Transfers between Friant Division and South-of-Delta Central Valley Project Contractors, 2010 – 2011

FONSI-10-26

Recommended by:

Michael Inthavong
Natural Resources Specialist
South-Central California Area Office

Date: _____

Concurred by:

Chuck Siek
Supervisory Natural Resources Specialist
South-Central California Area Office

Date: _____

Concurred by:

Michael Kinsey
Acting Chief, Resources Management Division
South-Central California Area Office

Date: _____

Approved by:

Laura Myers
Deputy Area Manager
South-Central California Area Office

Date: _____



U.S. Department of the Interior
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South-Central California Area Office

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Introduction

In accordance with section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended, the South-Central California Area Office of the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), has determined that the approval for transfers between Friant Division Central Valley Project (CVP) contractors to south-of-Delta CVP contractors is not a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment and an environmental impact statement is not required. This draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is supported by Reclamation's draft Environmental Assessment (EA) number EA-10-26, *East to West Transfers between Friant Division and South-of-Delta Central Valley Project Contractors*, and both are hereby incorporated by reference.

Background

The City of Fresno (CiF), Fresno Irrigation District (FID), and/or Orange Cove Irrigation District (OCID), hereto referred to as the "Transferring Districts", have agreed on the terms to transfer a portion of their Friant Division CVP water to SLWD and WWD, hereto referred to as the "Recipient Districts", and have requested Reclamation approval.

Reclamation proposes to approve transfers of up to 57,500 AF from the Transferring Districts to the Recipient Districts. More specifically, CiF would transfer up to 30,000 AF of its 2010 Friant Division CVP Class 1 water; FID would transfer up to 22,500 AF of their 2010 Friant Division CVP Class 2 water (to the extent Class 2 water is declared by Reclamation and is allocated to FID); and/or OCID would transfer up to 5,000 AF of their 2010 Friant Division CVP Class 1 water (together referred to as the "Transfer Water") to WWD and/or SLWD. The Transfer Water would be conveyed in existing facilities including the CVP, State Water Project (SWP), Cross Valley Canal (CVC), and/or other intermediate existing facilities. Since there are no conveyance facilities in place by which to accomplish direct delivery of the Transfer Water to the Recipient Districts, each of the transfers would be facilitated by exchange with Kern County Water Agency (KCWA), Santa Clara Valley Water District, and/or by utilizing recaptured flows stored in San Luis Reservoir (SLR) as a result of the San Joaquin River Restoration Interim Flows Project. The transfers would occur during the 2010 water year, with the completion of delivery occurring no later than February 29, 2012 (the end of the 2011 water year).

Findings

Water Resources

The Proposed Action would provide supplemental water supplies for the Recipient Districts in 2010 and 2011 to help deliver agricultural irrigation water to their customers within the appropriate places-of-use. It is anticipated that both 2010 and 2011 would be "dry" years and south-of-Delta CVP contractors would experience a reduction in their allocated contract supply; therefore, the Proposed Action would be beneficial to the Recipient Districts in meeting their in-district needs. The Transferring Districts currently have water available that is surplus to their respective immediate operational needs, and would still be able to adequately provide water to their customers under the Proposed Action. There would be no significant impacts to the Recipient and Transferring Districts' water resources.

The CVC, CVP and SWP facilities would not be impacted as the Proposed Action must be scheduled and approved by Reclamation, KCWA and/or the Department of Water Resources. Additionally, the transfers must be conducted in a manner that would not harm other CVP contractors or other CVP contractual or environmental obligations, or SWP contractors. Therefore, normal operations of the conveyance facilities and obligations by the overseeing agencies to deliver water and other requirements would not be significantly impacted.

Water that has been made available as a result of recaptured San Joaquin River Restoration interim flows in SLR would be exchanged with the Transferring Districts for a like-amount of water in Millerton Lake. Other Friant Contractors, who have a supply of this water that has been recaptured, could be a potential exchange partner and would not experience a net gain or loss of water. Utilization of stored interim flows water in SLR would need to be coordinated with the program's oversight committee. The Proposed Action would have no significant impacts to the interim flows project or the river restoration program.

The Proposed Action would not increase groundwater pumping from what has historically occurred within the Kings Subbasin by the Transferring Districts. The transfers are made possible due to water that is surplus to the Transferring Districts' immediate operational needs. The small increase in water supply for the Recipient Districts would not add measurable groundwater in either the Westside and/or Delta-Mendota Subbasins, especially in view of the fact that most of the water would be efficiently applied and used by crops, with minimal amounts leaching below the root zone and into groundwater. There would be no significant impacts to groundwater resources.

Land Use

There would be no significant impacts to land use in FID or OCID as their water supplies would not be reduced below demands. There would be a slightly positive impact on agricultural land use within the Recipient Districts compared with to the No Action Alternative due to the ability of some established row crops to remain in production and the enhanced survival of orchards.

Biological Resources

Most of the habitat types required by species protected by the Endangered Species Act do not occur in the Proposed Action area. The Proposed Action would not involve the conversion of any land fallowed and untilled for three or more years. While the Proposed Action would reduce the fallowed acreage, it would not substantially change the land use patterns of the cultivated or fallowed fields that may have some value to listed species or to birds protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Since no natural stream courses would be utilized as part of the Proposed Action, there would be no effects on listed fish species. No critical habitat occurs within the area affected by the Proposed Action, so critical habitat would not be affected.

The relatively small amounts of water associated with the Proposed Action (when compared to the amount of water supply deficit) and the requirement that no native lands be converted without consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would preclude impacts to wildlife, including federally listed species. Therefore, the Proposed Action would not significantly impact biological resources.

Cultural Resources

All transfers would occur through existing facilities and water would be provided within existing service area boundaries to areas that currently use water. The Proposed Action would not result in modification of any existing facilities, construction of new facilities, change in land use, or growth. This action has no potential to cause effect to historic properties pursuant to the regulations at 36 CFR Part 800.3(a)(1). As a result, the proposed undertaking would result in no significant impacts to cultural resources.

Indian Trust Assets (ITA)

Approval of the transfers between the Transferring Districts and the Recipient Districts would not involve any construction and would utilize existing conveyance facilities; therefore, activities associated with the Proposed Action would not impact ITA.

Socioeconomic Resources

The Proposed Action would allow for water deliveries to be made to the Recipient Districts and would help maintain the stability of the agricultural market and economical vitality for the San Joaquin Valley to a certain degree. The transfers are temporary actions and would not result in long-term increases in water supplies that would encourage urbanization, construction or other land disturbing activities. There would be no significant impacts to socioeconomic resources.

Environmental Justice

The Proposed Action would reduce dislocation and promote continued employment within the affected environment. The Proposed Action would not disproportionately impact economically disadvantaged or minority populations. The unemployment rate in the vicinity of the Recipient Districts suggests that any actions that maintain seasonal jobs should be considered beneficial. Employment opportunities for low-income wage earners and minority population groups would be within historical conditions; therefore, no significant impacts to environmental justice are anticipated.

Air Quality

Under the Proposed Action, movement of water between Transferring Districts and other potential exchange partners would be done via gravity flow and/or pumped using electric motors which have no emissions. There are no emissions from electrical motors and therefore a conformity analysis is not required under the Clean Air Act; therefore, no significant impacts to air quality are expected.

Global Climate Change

Green house gases (GHG) generated by the Proposed Action is expected to be extremely small since the transfer of water would be conveyed mostly via gravity and little, if any, additional pumping from electric motors would be required. While any increase in GHG emissions would add to the global inventory of gases that would contribute to global climate change, the Proposed Action would result in potentially minimal increases in GHG emissions and a net increase in GHG emissions among the pool of GHG would not be detectable. No significant impacts to global climate change are expected as a result of the Proposed Action.

Cumulative Impacts

The Proposed Action was found to have no adverse impacts on water, biological, and cultural resources, ITA and socioeconomics. The Proposed Action is a one-time, temporary action, and when added to other actions do not contribute to cumulative adverse impacts to existing environmental conditions. Slight beneficial impacts to land use and environmental justice would be within the historical variations and would not contribute to cumulative impacts.

It is also reasonably foreseeable that the Recipient Districts would receive additional transfers from other as described in Section 3.10 in the EA. The Recipient Districts' other similar existing and foreseeable actions would have the same impacts as the Proposed Action since all are transfers and/or exchanges would utilize existing conveyance facilities. Coordination to schedule the deliveries for all these actions would be required with the appropriate overseeing agency to ensure that the normal operations of the facilities involved would not be hindered. Overall, there would be no significant cumulative impacts from the Proposed Action and other related projects.